UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr. : LIMITED

E/ECA/TCD/72
24 Januart 1990

Original : ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Intergovernmental meeting of African
Port Experts and Senior Port Officials
on improvement of port performance

REPORT OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING OF AFRICAN PORT EXPERTS AND SENIOR PORT OFFICIALS ON IMPROVEMENT OF PORT PERFORMANCE

A. ORGANIZATION

1. The Intergovernmental Meeting of African Port Experts and Senior Port Officials on Improvement of Port Performance was held in ECA Headquarters in Addis Ababa from 22 to 24 January 1990.

B. PARTICIPATION

2. Representatives of the following Port Authorities of African governments, African Intergovernmental Organizations and United Nations specialized agencies took part in the work of the meeting: Algeria, Cameroun, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Tanzania, Zaire, East and Southern African Management Institute (ESAMI), International Labour Organization (ILO) Port Management Association for Eastern and Southern Africa (PMAESA), Port Management Association for Western and Central Africa (PMAWCA) United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

C. OPENING OF THE MEETING

3. The meeting was officially opened by Mr. Mpekesa Bongoy, Chief of the Transport Communications and Tourism Division of the Economic Commission for Africa in the name of Prof. Adebayo Adedeji United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of Economic Commission for Africa who was unable to attend the meeting due to other urgent commitments.

4. In his opening statement, Mr. Mpekesa Bongoy welcomed the participants and outlined the activities of ECA in assisting African countries to develop their ports since the establishment of the Commission. These activities were primarily focused on improving overall port performance.

5. He briefed the participants on the recent developments in the preparation of the programme of the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade and stressed the fact that port development issues would be given due attention in the programme.

6. The Chief of Transport Communications and Tourism Division further summarized the main purposes of the meeting including the follow-up of the recommendations, adopted during the first Intergovernmental Meeting of African Port Executives and Senior Port Officials held in Addis Ababa in October 1987.

7. He appealed to the meeting to reserve no efforts to improve Africa Ports performance in such a way that they could able to meet the challenge of modern technological developments on international shipping.

8. He went on saying that the issue of re-structuring port operations in such a manner that would make them financially viable and competitive should be given a particular attention. He further invited the delegates to examine the issue with a view to recommending appropriate measures which should be adopted for this purpose.

9. Mr. Mpokesa Bongoy emphasized the importance of the issues which would be raised in the papers of the representatives of ILO, IMO and UNCTAD and called upon the meeting to give these issues serious consideration and analysis.

10. He put forward the proposal that in view of the anticipated greater challenges for African ports in the future the cooperation among African ports should be further fostered and that as a step toward this goal a steering committee on co-operation among African ports could be created.

11. Mr. Bongoy concluded by wishing every success to the meeting.

D. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

Election of the Bureau and organization of work (Agenda Items 2 and 3)

12. The Bureau was elected as follows:

Chairman	-	Tanzania
Vice Chairman	-	Ethiopia
Rapporteur	-	Cameroun

13. The following proposed agenda was adopted:

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Election of the Bureau
3. Organization of Work
4. Report by ECA on the follow-up of the recommendations on co-operation adopted at the Intergovernmental Meeting of African Port Experts and senior officials held from 29 - 31 October 1987 (Addis Ababa)

5.1. Commercialization aspects of port activities (ECA)
5.2. Port as a Modal point in Transportation Chain (UNCTAD)
5.3. Modern Technological changes in port operations and their effect on port labour (ILO)
5.4. Safety aspects of port operation

6. Reports by the subregional port management associations on their activities and recent port development plans

7. Information by ECA on the Second United Nations Transport and Communications decade in Africa (1991-2000) in the field of development of African ports

8. Any other business
9. Adoption of the report

14. The meeting agreed to work [illegible]

Morning 09.30 hours - 13.00 hours
Afternoon 15.30 hours - 18.00 hours

Report of ECA on the follow-up of the recommendations on co-operation adopted at the Intergovernmental meeting of African Port Experts (agenda item 4)

15. A member of ECA secretariat introduced the paper TRANS/PORT/91/6 highlighting the activities of ECA in following up the recommendations of the first meeting of African port experts and money officials held in Addis Ababa from 29 to 31 October 1987.

16. In his presentation he indicated that [illegible] mission to PMAWCA and NAPNA was undertaken, questionnaire on port performance distributed and a report on port performance was prepared. A number of others activities were also listed by the ECA representative.

17. The representative of ECA brought to the attention of the meeting the fact that though co-operation among ports on sub-regional level was developing satisfactorily, the same could not be said of the co-operation among the sub-regions of Africa, namely, West/Central, East/Southern and Northern Sub-regions.

18. It was submitted for consideration of the meeting that a permanent co-ordination committee on co-operation be created. Such a committee would include the representatives of the three African port management associations, ILO, IMO, UNCTAD and ECA, the [illegible]ring also as a secretariat. UNDP will be invited to attend the Committee's meetings as observer.

19. The idea of creating the committee was supported by the delegates. It was decided also that the committee would meet once a year presumably during the council meeting of one of the African Port Management Associations.

20. The terms of reference of the committee would include,

- preparation of the programme of co-operation
- review and distribution of the available studies to ports and the Port Management Associations.
- revision of the list of African port experts
- preparation of the proposals on regional ports projects

- participation in the preparation of the Decade programme in respect of regional port projects.

In future, one of the duties of that committee would be to assist in the establishment of an African Port Association whose members will include Port Authorities and handling corporations.

ECA will be responsible for preparation of the meetings of the committee.

21. It was indicated by one of the delegates that while the activities of ECA in following up the recommendations of the previous meeting of port experts were discussed in details, there were no interventions on the part of the representatives of the national port authorities which would give an account of the follow up of the recommendations on the level of governments.

22. It was mutually agreed that the representatives of national port authorities will be given floor immediately after presentation of the reports on activities of the sub-regional port management associations.

23. It was also agreed that the reports of national port authorities and port management associations should be closely related to the follow up of the recommendations on sub-regional and national levels.

Commercialization aspects of Port Activities (agenda item 5.1)

24. The major idea of this document was to highlight the imperious need for port authorities to carry out efficiently their duties in order to meet the challenges of the modern technologies and the competition with other ports in attracting cargo.

25. After extensive discussions the meeting arrived at the conclusion that ECA should be given finance to carry out a study on marketing port services. It was proposed that the study would include different sampled types of port organizations in Africa and show the performance of these different types, giving the actual figures, structure, port organization etc. It will enable African port authorities to study and select an appropriate scheme for their own organization. It was also recommended that the practice of signing the performance contracts between port and state be widely introduced.

26. It was agreed that ECA would endeavour to raise funds inorder to undertake such a study which then will be brought to the attention of African port community.

Ports as the Nodal Point in an Integrated Transport System (agenda item 5.2)

27. The paper was presented by the representative of UNCTAD Shipping division. He cited the fact that most ports in many developing countries were viewed as a provider of employment rather than services and were often not ranked in accordance with their importance to the national economy.

28. He reminded the meeting of the essential role played by ports in the context of import/export promotion and therefore the need to have in place an efficient and cost effective handling system which was one of the important elements in the whole transport system.

29. Containerisation has been growing at a steady pace in Africa and this resulted in changes to port construction, layouts cargo handling equipment, manpower levels and skills and even the location of ports. In particular ports now required much greater land areas and specialised handling equipment.

30. He suggested that one method of promoting activity in the port sector was the creation of a customs free or industrial processing zones. This was the first stage of developing the port into a service centre. The underlying concept of creating these centres was to upgrade port activities from pure cargo handling at end points of a transport mode to a nodal point in an integrated transport chain which would offer additional services such as electronic data processing, storage and distribution.

31. The main purpose of distribution centres was to optimise collection storage and delivery of general cargo in a coordinated manner. The centres would allocate cargo to different modes of long distance inland transport, handle and store consignments and provide control and documentation facilities. These centres allowed production units to deliver ports "just in time" thereby avoiding preparation of an inventory. They also gave the latitude for importers to delay payment of customs duties until the goods actually leave the port.

32. He also mentioned the possibilities of such centres facilitating the use of rail or inland waterways in such a way as to guarantee a steady flow of containers to ensure that unit trains moved at sufficiently frequent intervals thereby optimizing the movement of goods and in turn the realisation of benefits from investment on the new infrastructures. Privatisation of certain sectors of ports was also possible within these service centres.

33. In the ensuing discussions the meeting was informed that Africa had a share of 12 per cent and 5 per cent for goods loaded and unloaded from developing countries respectively.

34. On the creation of a distribution centre defined by UNCTAD as a physical warehouse operated by the port authority or by other operators (e.g. Rotterdam), for storing and dispatching of goods, the Nigerian delegation suggested that the creation of a distribution centre was a step towards the creation of a customs free zone.

35. After recalling that the establishment of the customs free area falls under the purview of governments, some delegations have suggested that in the process of their creation, the following important aspects be taken into consideration:-

- deregulation
- problems with security
- reduction of government's customs revenue

It was argued that with adequate security in place, a customs free zone would not require payment of bonds on goods being transhipped. In this way ports would attract new cargo. Djibouti delegation gave its own experience on the creation of a duty free zone. This had increased port utilization and therefore revenue generation through the setting up of small scale industries and the attraction of new cargo to/from neighbouring countries.

36. The meeting was reminded that the ports fell under the purview of government and it was up to the Port Authorities to lobby their board of directors on the advantages of having a customs free zone.

37. On the creation of selected transhipment centres within a subregion, the meeting agreed these could only be developed at national levels rather than subregional.

Modern Technological Changes in Port Operations and Their Effect on Port Labour (agenda item 5.3)

38. The paper was presented by a Regional Consultant of ILO on Maritime activities. He reviewed the development of cargo handling since the 1960s and how computer technology, containerisation and its supportive infrastructures were introduced to developing countries and their impact on labour intensive methods.

39. During the past 20 years workers on port operations had felt the drastic decline of job opportunities due to these technological changes.

ILO after extensive research, formulated a strategy for port worker training. It is estimated that one million workers will require training. A focus on the training of trainers should therefore be given priority.

40. In conclusion he identified the following possible developments in port industry

- development of ever increasing container vessels
- larger dimensions of containers
- reduction of vertical movement in favour of greater horizontal movements in container handling.
- further repercussions resulting from increased use of computer and robot technology in port industry.
- increase of container traffic on account of break bulk cargoes
- the concept of a mastery chain through logistics organisation
- standardisation of training courses in related fields in the port industry
- improved working and living conditions and better career opportunities for port workers.

41. Developing countries were urged to take a critical look at these possible developements in the industry.

42. In the discussions that followed the general consensus was that there was a serious technological push in the port industry. The change from labour to capital intensive operations benefited developed countries who were experiencing high labour costs.

43. The changes in the standardised containers caused a lot of concern to the meeting. It was suggested that African member states and Port Management Associations be represented at the forthcoming International Standards Organisation (ISO) meeting dealing with containers standards, to be held in September 199).

44. On the whole it was agreed that unitisation and containersation using the accepted ISO standard containers was beneficial to all in that it resulted in the reduction of transport costs.

Safety aspects of Port Operations (Agenda item 5.4)

45. The paper was introduced by a representative of ECA as IMO could not delegate its representative to the meeting and sent text of the paper only.

The main issues covered in the paper were as follows:

- Low level of safety in ports in comparision with that in shipping
- Ports and terminals as the most important and most expensive link in transportation chain
- Unattractiveness of unsafe ports for ship operators
- High risk of accidents in ports and on approaches to them
- Necessity of training in port's safety aspects
- Applicability of IMO conventions (SOLAS 1974/78 and STCW 1978) in ports.
- Measures to be taken to improve safe operations in ports
- Account of some training institutions covering aspects of port safety in their programmes.

46. It was agreed that due to its nature the port is at the higher risk of accidents when handling the ships along side or in and out. The majority of accidents in the ports are directly connected with deficiencies in ships and their cargoes.

47. During the discussions the participants stressed it that the IMO paper covered the issue of port safety in its original technical sense. For the purpose of this meeting the problem should be looked into in a wider sense.

48. There are many aspects of safety in the port. It is commercial safety, technical safety, safety of life, pollution etc. It was stressed that port safety is often at risk due to lack of general work ethics and attitude.

49. The participants agreed that the ports should maintain close collaboration and adopt common attitude in solving safety problems.

50. It was recommended to ECA as a follow-up of the deliberations to systematically analize the problems existing in the field of port safety and regularly bring it to the attention of the respective port authorities directly and through port management associations.

Reports by Subregional Port Management Associations (agenda item 6)
Port Management Association of West and Central African States (PMAWCA)

51. On behalf of the President of PMACWA, the Secretary-General of the Association described the activities of the Association after having thanked ECA for the support it provided to the Association in port management. Because ports had a crucial role to play in development, it was easy to understand the need to bring Port Management Associations to participate in the preparation of the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa. The 15th Session of the Governing Council of the Association had been hosted in Cameroon in 1989. At the Intergovernmental meeting held from 29 to 31 October 1987, the study on the performance of African ports had been on the agenda. The Association had been closely involved in that work and was therefore responsible in part for the implementation of recommendations made by the intergovernmental meeting.

52. To illustrate his statement, he referred to two background documents, namely : (a) Ways and means to improve port performance in African ports. (TRANS/PORT/9)/6) of 11 January 199).

(b) Recommendations made during the Intergovernmental Meeting of Chief Executives and Senior Port Officials of African ports on the improvement of port productivity in Africa.

53. The first document had dealt with the follow-up of recommendations. In that regard, ECA had fielded a mission to the secretariat of the Association in Lagos from 5 to 9 July 1988. The secretariat of the Association supported the recommendations made by the meeting. ECA had prepared a report (Document ECA/TRANSCOM/72) on the basis of a questionnaire to which members of the Association had overwhelmingly responded.

Harmonization of port regulations in West and Central Africa

54. The document prepared by ECA In this regard had been considered at the 14th Session of the Governing Council of the Association held in December 1988. The legal complexity of the issue had been highlighted.

55. At the end of the 15th Governing Council Session, it had been proposed that the matter should be entrusted to a newly-established committee. ECA, UNCTAD and IMO had been invited to provide assistance. The Committee would continue its work and report to the 16th session of the Council scheduled for December 1990.

Preparation of the Second United Nations Transport Decade in Africa

56. The Association welcomed the decision taken by the ECA to involve it in the preparation of the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (UNTACDA) II. The Association had participated in the work of the Inter-Agency Coordination Committee (IACC). It had submitted a list of projects to be included in the programme for UNTACDA II. At the 15th Session of the Governing Council of the Association, ECA had submitted a document on the objectives, strategies and guidelines for the preparation of the UNTACDA II work programme spanning 1991-2000. At that meeting, all members of the Association had familiarized themselves with the programme for UNTACDA II.

Information-sharing

57. During the meeting held in Addis Ababa in 1987, information had been shared by the three Associations. Comprehensive lists of all research conducted since 1977 had been circulated at the 14th session of the Governing Council in December 1988 and ECA had been given copies to forward to any sister organizations.

58. The Secretary-General announced that a joint meeting of PMAWCA and PMAESA had been scheduled for October 1990.

59. Turning to the Directory of African Port Experts, he indicated that work had commenced in 1987 on the preparation and publication of an Almanac. A list of experts had been sent to ECA by the secretariat of the Association in August 1989.

60. The Association had conducted a number of seminars and symposia. To date, 9 seminars and 5 symposia had been organized by the Association. Positive results had been achieved on the recommendations made by the seminars and symposia.

61. In terms of training, efforts had been made to establish a training centre for port handling personnel at Cotonou while work on the mechanics training centre for navigation aid maintenance would be finalized with the support of UNDP.

62. The Secretary-General had availed himself of the opportunity of the seminars to inform participants about the various measures that his organization had taken in conducting the activities of the Association. Those measures had had to do with feasibility studies, harmonization,coordintion, the constitution of operating funds as well as explanatory missions fielded to approach other African Port Management Associations.

63. With regard to the performance of African ports, the Secretary-General of the Association refuted the statistical data contained in the relevant document. Since 1987, the performance of West and Central African Ports had been improved and the statistics available at the secretariat of the Association would be communicated to ECA.

Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern African States (PMAESA)

64. The Secretary General of this Association gave a brief description of the activities of his Association, highlighting the difficult condition under which it was established. He explained that the formation of PMAESA was effected in 1971 following the decision of the African Ministerial Conference held in Tunis in 1971.

65. Through the support and assistance of ECA, the Association was able to grow until June 1989 when the Government of Kenya agreed to host the Secretariat. ECA also served the Association by seconding an interim Secretary General for the period of 15 years during which the Association did not have a Secretary General of its own.

66. The Secretary General of the Association was appointed at 15th Council Meeting held in Khartoum, Sudan from 23 - 27 January, 1989. The Secretary General reported that several projects were earmarked since the formation of the Association none, of which were implemented due to lack of funds.

67. To date, 16 Council and 13 Executive Committee Meetings were held at which important recommendations were made and these were not given adequate attention pending the appointment of a permanent Secretary General for follow-up.

The Secretary General stressed that some dormant members have ceased paying their annual subscription except for Zambia who has resumed paying same. The Secretary General appealed to other dormant members to follow the example of Zambia.

68. The Secretary General paid his tribute to ECA and ILO for their kind assistance and cooperation in the effort of strengthening PMAESA and requested further for the continuation of similar assistance.

69. The secretariat of ECA drew the attention of the meeting to the consequences of such a situation and invited participants to think out the ways and means that African countries should pursue in order to cope with the exigencies of Europe 1992 since ports were a key sector in the development of transport.

70. Participants requested ECA to take the necessary steps so as to express the concern of port management officials. ECA was to make recommendations to member States as to actions they should take in the matter of port management.

Information by ECA on the Second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade in Africa (1991-2000) in the field of development of African ports (Agenda Item 7)

71. A representative of the secretariat presented a report on the preparations of the programme of the second United Nations Transport and Communications Decade for Africa (UNTACDA II). The programme of the first Decade programme (1978 - 1988) was briefly discussed with special emphasis on the results of the ports sector projects which achieved over 50% implementation rate.

72. As concerns the overall Decade programme, it was stated that the experience from the first Decade programme encouraged the African countries to declare a second Decade programme in order to continue the efforts made during the first one. In particular, it was agreed that the objectives of the first Decade remained valid, but the strategies needed to be changed. That is why the preparation of the Second Decade lay great emphasis on the participation of member States, African sub-regional and sub-sectoral organizations in its preparations. In this regard, the ECA hoped that the participants in the meeting would take an active part in either their respective National Coordinating Committees or the sub-sectoral working groups on ports which have been set up to prepare the programme.

73. Finally the ECA informed the meeting that the African Ministers in charge of the Decade programme have set up a Resource Mobilization Committee to assist in the mobilization of financial and technical resources for the preparation and implementation of the Decade programme. It is hoped that this committee would be able to increase the success of the programme.

74. In the ensuing discussions, concern was expressed regarding the level of State investments in ports infrastructures as well as the operating status (eg. extent of autonomy) of the ports authorities. In this regard, it was suggested that the Decade programme also address these relevant policy issues.

Any other business (Agenda item 8)

75. The representative of UNCTAD informed participants about the UNDP/WORLD BANK/ILO/IMO/UNCTAD/ECA project on case studies in human resources development and institutional arrangements for rail, road, and multimodal transport and ports. The study covered four ports of Africa, namely: Dakar, Abidjan, Assab and Mombasa. The areas considered in the study were: Government control, general administration, procurement, operations, financing and human resources management.

76. As soon as work on the project was completed, the findings of the study would be disseminated.

77. He also announced that his organization would convene an Intergovernmental meeting of Port Experts in Geneva from 17 to 21 September 1990 dealing with the issues of transhipment, computerization, port equipment maintenance and handling, cooperation between ports. The participants suggested that this meeting gathers not only port authorities but also national handling corporations.

78. The draft report of the meeting was adopted with minor amendments.

79. After the adoption of the report the Chief of TCTD requested the participants to assess the value of the meeting and to point out the areas which needed more attention from the secretariat in the future. The representative of ECA invited frank discussions on the issue.

80. In the ensuing discussions, the following remarks were made:

(a) The invitation to the meeting was received by the participants well in advance as the short notice given for this particular meeting prevented many countries from attending.

(b) The forthcoming meetings should concentrate on key and specific issues in the field of ports, like the problem of port equipment maintenance only, or relations with port users, or port documentations etc.

(c) All documents should be prepared both in French and English. It was noticed during this meeting that two main papers, those of IMO and UNCTAD were in English only.

At the same time participants agreed on that the meeting in general was well organized and they benefited from participation in it.

The participants appealed to ECA to continue organizing the meetings of African Port Experts on regular basis.

81. The representative of ECA thanked most sincerely those who spoke on the issue and invited additional written comments, suggestions and proposals from those participants who wished to do so after the meeting. He then thanked all the participants on behalf of the Executive Secretary of ECA, for having taken an active part during the deliberations of the meeting.

82. The Chairman of the meeting declared the meeting closed at 20.15 pm of Wednesday 24 January 1990.

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